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ABSTRACT

In order to explore the nature of the black experience in the United States, this paper discusses the racial myths found in the Bible, science, and sociology, as well as the consequences of these myths. Pro-slavery forces have used ambiguous passages from the Bible to try to demonstrate that slavery is sanctioned by religion. A scientific theory has held that blacks are basically inferior due to a difference in species. Sociological theory stated that slavery is beneficial to whites, blacks, and society as a whole. The following historical consequences of these three sources of racial myths are then discussed: the self-fulfilling prophecies created by labelling blacks as deviant, the origins of slavery in the United States, the courts and police as perpetuators of the "deviant" label, and the seemingly immortal stigma associated with being black. It is concluded that as long as cultural, physical, emotional, and situational differences can be perceived by people, these very characteristics will lead to the perpetuation of distinctions between the superior and the inferior. (CC)

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MEN, MASTERIES AND MYTHOLOGIES: A CREATION OF BLACKNESS AND BLACK FOLK AS A FORM OF CULTURAL DEVIANCE

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Men, Masteries and Mythologies: A Creation of Blackness and Black Folk

The express purpose of this paper is to explore the nature of the Black experience in America. There are many myths that have grown up about what it means to be black, a condition in skin pigmentation that readily draws the attention of the most obtuse of observers. This, the one condition that is as representative of a particular cultural trait as any badge, beacon or advertisement of the existence of a different "norm". The term norm is used in this sense to point that to be black of color is a perfectly normal occurrence for a vast number of people. In fact, to "have color" is a physiological trait characteristic of a majority of the world's population. However, historically speaking, the very nature of possessing "color" has been repeatedly defined as a matter of artificial occurrence predicated by an Almighty Hebrew God, a young science, a partisan polity, or a basic behavioristic-reductionist theory of "manifest destiny".

This paper shall deal in turn with Biblical prophecy, scientific theory sociological explanations. The bulk of the paper shall be devoted the consequences that have grown up about and as a result of these myths.

Defleur (1971:316) seems to maintain that man will inevitably classify races and respond to them in specified ways of their culture. He states that certain "racial" categories have been established by official acts or by popular practice, and if a person is classified in one of these categories, it will have numerous effects on his life activities. Mere observation shows that the categorization of an individual into one of these "racial" orders may and often does have

severe consequences for some group of individuals. The imposition of the label of "black" on an individual or group in and of itself does not hamper the life chances of that individual or group. However, the corresponding set of behaviors and restrictions that result from the label are of importance to the relative assimilation of one group into another, and moreso to the consideration of another group as equal and tolerable.

The Mark of Cain and Noah's Curse

The Biblical justification of slavery came mostly as a result of the abolitionist charge that slavery was a sin. These ardent practitioners of Biblical thought found it necessary to justify their use of slavery and subjugation of a people in an effort to align their economic assets with their moral obligation to "humanity". The pro-slavery forcers sought to prove that slavery was not cruel and immoral, that it enriched rather than impoverished the South, and that it provided a base for a superior, divine-inspired culture. In their efforts to correct "abolitionist distortions" and present slavery as an idyllic and humane institution, they felt it necessary to combat the popular dissatisfaction with slavery as a system and to demonstrate that it was sanctioned by religion, political economy, science and culture.

Lloyd (1939:166) states that the pro-slavery argument stated that the Negro race had been especially ordained to be slaves. This was revealed in the Book of Genesis, twice, by the direct order of God and the indirect edict issued through Noah.

Many individuals who were sympathetic to the concept of slavery relied upon interpretations of the Hebrew text to justify their "right" to hold slaves. Witness the following excerpt from the New English Bible (1970:5) God's admonishment and curse upon Cain:

> Now you are accursed, and banished from the ground . . .
> "You shall be a vagrant and wanderer on earth.
> . . . So the Lord put a mark on Cain, in order that
> anyone meeting him should not kill him.

Many of the slave holders interpreted this passage as God's punishment of a race of people. It was largely interpreted that this "mark" that God placed upon Cain was pigmentation of his skin. By making his skin dark (and that of his decendants), he would be easily recognizable to all of humanity as a sinner or undesirable.

If a great deal of inference was needed to interpret the interaction between God and the generations of Cain as the creation of Black folk, this was not the case in the interpretation of the curse of Noah. Apparently, sometime after the Flood, Noah, who was a farmer, began the planting and harvesting of vineyards. He then drank the wine, became intoxicated and fell naked into a drunken stupor in his tent. When Ham, his youngest son, came into the tent and saw his father naked, he told this to his brothers, who proceeded to back into the tent with a cloak to cover their fathers body. Noah, awakening from his drunken sleep, learned of Ham's "sin" (1970:10) and proclaimed.

'Cursed be Canaan, slave of slaves shall he be to his brothers.'

Continuing:

> 'Bless, O Lord, the tents of Shem; may Canaan be his slave.
> May God extent Japeth's bounds, let him dwell in the tents
> of Shem, may Canaan be their slave.'

It has been historically believed that the decendants of Canaan (the son of Ham) resided in all of what is now Africa. In essence, Ham became the father of the race of Black folk. This reasoning was a carryover from Europe. Throughout history Africa has been known by names derivative of the lineage of Ham such as, Hammitic, Canaan, Cush and Punt. It was asserted that the curse of Noah was an act of God which was placed on the Negro race which was believed to be made up of the children of Ham. (Stringfellow, 1960:463)

The pro-slavery writers also pointed to the evidence of slavery during the time of Abraham. Lloyd (177) issues a list of Abraham's property, extracted from Genesis 12:16, notes that he possessed "men-servants and maid-servants." The pro-slavery writers maintained that "servant" had originally meant "slave" in the Greek and Hebrew translations. Dabney (1967:112) notes that Sarah, the wife of Abraham, had an Egyptian "handmaid", Hagar, who was directed to cohabit with Abraham. After having a son by him, Hagar fled. In Genesis 26:7-9, it is related how the Angel of the Lord found her and directed her to "return to thy mistress, and submit thyself to her." This was cited as an instance when God, himself, through one of his angels, had commanded a slave to return to her position of domestic servitude and to submit to it.

Many were the examples cited by the Old Testament argument. The Mosaic law which authorized the buying and holding of bondmen and maidservants was especially emphasized. (Dodd, 1919:49)

The New Testament proved a little more difficult in the attempt to find Biblical support for slavery. The general conclusion of the

pro-slavery writers was that Jesus Christ did not disapprove of slavery because he had not condemned it. Dabney (150-154) pointed out that there were millions of slaves at the time of Jesus who were in very poor condition, but Jesus did not suggest that slavery was a sin. It was also pointed out that Christ applauded a slaveholder, the Centurion of Capernaum, as being a man of great faith. Christ had healed the Centurion's slave but did not say that the slave should be freed. Hesseltine (1936:278) points to a final justification of slavery from the New Testament where the Apostle Paul directed the fugitive Onesimus to return to his master.

Scientific Justification

Without completely discarding the scriptural justification, a more scientific group of Southerners advanced the idea that the basic inferiority of the Black was fundamentally due to a difference in species. Instead of adhering to the doctrine of "unity", that is, the origin of the race of man from a single pair, they advanced the "Plurality" theory which maintained that there were several different species of man which originated from different pairs at widely separated points. (Lloyd, 228-9) Lloyd shows one scientific group as maintaining that the earth was divided into several zoological provinces each having its own distinct climate, fauna, and flora. This school maintained that people were no exception to this principle but conformed to it. Each of these "centers of creation" produced a certain type of human being. Reasoning from this point of view posited the theory that the Caucausian was a superior due to the region in which he is believed to have evolved, that is the Northern regions of Europe and Asia. Logic seemed to imply that

the climatic rigors of the Northland posed the problems of food gathering and shelter to the Caucausoid stock, demanding greater ingenuity in combating the elements and obtaining food. In contrast, the Black, believed to have evolved in the warmer climates, the weather was not a source of major concern and food gathering making no greater demand than the urge to get up and get it. With these basic assumptions in mind, the caucausian was declared to be naturally ingenious, intelligent, and strong (fit), while the Black was declared naturally dull, uninventive, and lazy.

Craven (1942:160) states that the pro-slavery element asserted that in all countries certain types of production were better suited for the slave laborer than others. Furthermore, they said that the subtropical conditions in the South were ideal for Negroes but unsatisfactory for whites. Again, these conclusions were reached by observations, conclusions, measurements, and anatomical studies directed to "prove" that the Negro was in essence an inferior species. They noted that Blacks had a "peculiar" anatomy with a decided inclination to the quadruped posture, a small cerebrum. It was definite that the Negro was an inferior species of man, which they then named Prognathous. (Cartwright, 1860:707-16)

In general, the advocates of the Adam and Eve theory of the creation took exception to this scientific thought as denying the Bible. It is difficult to ascertain to what extent the scientific school influenced Southern opinion. This is mainly because it did not develop fully until the 1850's, and by that time the Biblical justification was widely accepted, and this scientific thought was partially in conflict with the Bible. (Lloyd, 1939:242)

Social Science to the Rescue

With the failure of the anatomical sciences to explain perceived differences between the two major races and the shaky ground on which the Biblical explanations were based, scholars, economists and the like were persistently attempting to perfect more easily seen logic to explain the "nature of things." At the vanguard of these explanations was the sociological argument. This argument, put forward by the pro-slavery element of the South and reinforced with the backing of many college professors, stated that slavery was beneficial to whites, Blacks, and society as a whole. The whites were benefited because they were freeded from menial tasks and were therefore, able to pursue other problems. They had leisure to acquire knowledge and culture, to practice in the fine arts and sciences, and to participate in government. (Craven, 165) Hesseltine (281) states that because of slavery, the manners and morals of the South were improved, and the necessity for caring for the Blacks inspired a spirit of kindliness among the master class. As for the Blacks, they had been taken from savagery and brought into contact with civilization and religion, and were far better off economically, physically and morally than their ancestors had been in Africa. As for society-at-large, the pro-slavery writers pointed to the fact that Southern society was established, peaceful and calm. There existed none of the disadvantages of a free society. There was no prostitution in the South, and the white woman was placed on a plane that was supposedly equal to that of the angels. There were no poor-houses in the South for the plantation system cared for the young and the old. The jails of the South were not filled with petty criminals

and the poverty that existed in the Northern cities was unknown.

Henry Hughes and George Fitzhugh (Lyman, 1972:15, 16) in independent studies, produced two of the first sociological treatises produced in America. Coming to the defense of slavery, Hughes argued that slavery was "morally and civilly good" and should be preserved; Fitzhugh held that only in a society built upon slavery and Christianity (and eschewing liberty, equality, and laissez-faire ideals) could morality and order be maintained.

Lyman (1972:15) directs attention to the "American School" of ethnology in developing the theory of "polygenism" in which it was held that the races of men are in fact separate species. Although the motives of these ethnologists were for the most part scientific, their conceptions of the origins of races lent support to slavery and reinforced prejudice against Blacks.

The emergence of the movement of Social Darwinism also served as a reinforcement theory of the "Black" label. Lyman sees Sumner as being the focal point in shaping attitudes utilizing the social darwinist perspective. Sumner introduced the idea of cultural relativism, and opposed the "absurd effort" of philosophers and reformers to "make the world over." (Sumner, 1963:163). Lyman notes that Sumner explained the racial troubles of America as arising out of the breakup of the harmonious relations that had existed between

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*For a detailed explanation of the Biblical myth that sprang from the logic of the European whites about the nature of the Black skin-color springing from a direct curse of Noah upon his son Ham, see Winthrop Jordan's White over Black, p. 41. Also see Frantz Fanon's Black Skin, White Masks, pp. 188-190, discussions of the Black man as a living symbol of sin.

Blacks and whites prior to the abolition of slavery.

Thomas (1904) differentiated between basic "race prejudice" and "caste-feeling," maintaining that the northerner feels race prejudice, i.e., based on skin-color or a horror of the external aspect of Blacks, while the feelings of the southerner was based on caste in the sense that it was so ineradicably associated with inferiority that it was impossible for a southern white to think the Negro into his own class.

My sentiments of the immortality of the imputation of the derogatory demeanor to Black folk are echoed in the following statement by Charles Horton Cooley in his emphasization of the inevitability of castelike relationships developing in biracial societies:

> Two races of different temperament and capacity, distinct to the eye and living side by side in the same community, tend strongly to become castes, no matter how equal the social system may otherwise be. The race caste . . . illustrates the impotence of demographic traditions to overcome the caste spirit when fostered by obvious physical and psychial differences. This spirit is no apparent prospect of its diminution.*

It seems highly unlikely, to my mind, there will ever be any means for interpreting Blacks as normal, ordinary human beings. Any accomplishment, innovation or merit achieved by individuals whose skin color is darker than "blue" must, prior to accreditation be directly assignated as Black (whatever).

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*For a discussion of some present-day ideas about Black folk, see Gene Marine's "I've Got Nothing Against the Colored, Understand," from Ramparts, 1966, also "The Last Ditch," by Robert Coles, from Children of Crises: A Study of Courage and Fear. See Stokley Carmichael's "Power and Racism," In Crisis: A Contemporary Reader, ed. Peter Collier, 1969. See White Attitudes Toward Black People by Angus Campbell, 1971.

The fact is that the present trend toward polite distaste and resigned acceptance of the Black faces in the crowd is a guise for the omni-present near imperceptible twinges of prejudice. The white, in his everyday workings may present himself as tolerant and rational, and may hold his racist belief in a remote-attic-room of his consciousness (its in vogue "not" to be prejudiced in some circles); may have, driven it from consciousness into a latent zone due to moral censure that is not activated until such time that a Black attempts to move in next door or becomes enamored of his daughter. It may even take a riot to activate the racial stereotype — "You see, they can't be trusted; we'd better arm ourselves." (Kovel: 52, 53)

In a dramatic sense, the issue of Blackness, classifies the individual "plagued" with this malady as a sort of enemy deviant (Gusfield, 1967:175, 33). In this sense, the designator and the deviant often perceive one another as enemies. If the designator is the more powerful of the two, the resulting behavior is that of domination, while on the other hand, the rise of the deviant to a power position is considered a threat. The general group of behaviors that have grown up around the instance of being Black are a direct result of societal labelling of the two groups in question as diametric opposites. Can the stigma be overcome? For there to emerge a barrier to further perpetuation of the label would require development of criteria for the classification and determination of human attributes more significant and indicative then one's biological skin-pigmentation.

The Historical Consequences of Blackness: Black is Deviant

Another argument that was closely akin to the one based on sociology was that slavery was based upon a consideration of the natural order of things. The leaders of this argument abandoned the equalitarian ideas of the Declaration of Independence. As Chancelor Harper of South Carolina put it (Dodd,57):

> Is it not palpably nearer the truth to say that no man was ever born free and that no two men were ever born equal, than to say that all men are born free and equal? . . . Man is born to subjection . . . The proclivity of the nature of man is to domineer or to be subservient.

These leaders held that men were not equal, but while some men were suited for the task of direction and management of labor, others were fit only for hard toil in the fields. The assertion that all men were created equal was said to be impossible to prove; moreover, the inequality of man was held essential to human progress. In a seeming effort at blatant behavioristic-reductionism based on a matter of economics, Thomas R. Dew, president of William and Mary College, summarized the principle when he said:

> The exclusive owners of property ever have been, ever will and perhaps ever ought to be the virtual rulers of mankind . . . It is the order of nature and of God that the being of superior power should control and dispose of those who are inferior. It is as much in the order of nature that men should enslave each other as other animals should prey upon each other. (Dodd, 53)

Harper summed up the thought of the time by stating, "If there are sordid, servile, and laborious offices to be performed, is it not better that there should be sordid, servile, laborious beings to perform them?" (Harper, 1860:611)

Throughout history, the life of the slave has been depicted as blissful in that he was cared for from the cradle to the grave. The

accounts of the numerous treatises proclaiming the palatibility of the inferior status of the Black are far to voluminous to be chronicled here. What becomes important is to pursue the consequences of the aforementioned depictions and ascriptions of the nature of "blackness." More apparent than what one initially expects is the total system of actions and reactions that accrue to individual labelled in a total derogatory manner such as the Black. In fact, a whole complex of behaviors have emerged periodically and persistently that have the very real effect of painting the Black as a deviant. Through the courts, police and legislators have served in turn in the perpetuation of the derogatory demeanor assigned to being Black. The purpose here is to explore a kind of deviance (being Black) that is not normally perceived as collective under studies of deviance; visible deviance.

Since Blacks set foot on this continent, they have shared and exhibited a characteristic uncommon to the vast majority of others co-existing on this land. The concept of deviance can be considered as a quality of people's response to an act or condition. This is exemplified by the definition set forth by Becker (1963:9):

> Social groups create deviance by making the rules whose infraction constitutes deviance, and by applying those rules to a particular people and labelling them as outsiders . . . deviance is not a quality of the act the person commits, but rather a consequence of the application by others of rules and sanctions to an "offender." The deviant is one to whom that label has successfully been applied; deviant behavior is behavior that people so label.

If one accepts this definition of deviant behavior, it is only a small step further to envision an historical process of continuous labelling of Blacks at a point in history and being systematically selected and processed into a "career" of deviancy based entirely upon

his visibility as an object. Simply stated, that group of behaviors that the Black has been forced to accept, or to avoid under extreme duress has repeatedly placed the Black in such a light that his ascribed behavior becomes, in actuality, self-fulfilling. From the definitional aspect of the nature of Black folk, the definitions themselves are tautological. They're Black, therefore, they are shifty, lazy and immoral. They're shifty, lazy and immoral because they're Black. The imposition of the label of "black" on an individual or group in and of itself does not hamper the life chances of that group. However, the corresponding set of behaviors and restrictions that result from the label are of importance to the relative assimilation of one group into another. In this society, classification according to race has literally meant the difference between life as a second-class citizen (at one time a slave), and as a free and equal citizen.

The Creation of a Label

In 1619, settlers in the Virginia Colony purchased twenty Blacks from a "Dutch man of warre." At this point, a people uniquely different from any on the continent become objects of attention due to their darkness of hue, and presented with a destiny to be inextricably linked with that of the society as a whole. (Brawley, 1921:9)

The arrival of these Black folk into American society, although in a condition of servitude, was not one made in slavery. Many of these Blacks were indentured servants, however (DeFleur, 318), when the several colonies began to clarify their laws and make clear distinctions between indentured servitude and slavery, it was the

latter that became the category reserved for Blacks. Thus, the fate of Blacks became sealed for hundreds of years. By the end of the seventeenth century, slavery had been given legal status in all the American colonies.

There were many instances when Blacks made attempts to reject the label of "object" with scattered revolts and uprisings. However, the net result of these sporadic outbursts was the accumulation of increasingly severe laws that placed total control of the slaves in the hands of their owners. In truth, a human group became legally equated with property according to the law of the land.

DeFleur states that the institution of slavery developed an elaborate system of rituals to govern relations between Blacks and whites. The system of racial "etiquette" demanded that Blacks internalize and exhibit overtly symbolic indications of subservience, humility, and inferiority in the presence of a white. Futhermore, the economic, political and social systems demanded that the Black be defined as biologically, morally, and intellectually inferior in an ethnocentric attempt at self-appraisal. Elaborate arguments were invented to "prove" that he was subhuman, childlike, animalistic, and generally deservant of slavery. The seeking out and identification of various religious arguments based upon isolated biblical references were useful in the justification of his bondage. In many states, it was illegal to teach Blacks to read and write. (DeFleur, 319)

Police as a Reinforcement Agent

The power of institutions in the perpetuation of a label should not be overlooked in the fixation of a deviant identity. Differential arrest,

surveillance and degradation peculiar to the public eye, serve as reinforcers of the secondary status of the Black citizen.

Johnson (1941:97) maintains that by mistreatment or brutality toward any group or class of individuals, police can provoke or stimulate the commission of crime. Blacks have historically been more exposed to the misuse of police power than any other group. Police are prone to use the gun or club as a first resort in dealing with Blacks. Many of the actions of the police and social control related agencies at once come to the attention of the community-at-large, and through conjunction with the courts (in cases where behavior reached this stage), Blacks have become publicly oppressed and degraded. These degradations became the norm for treatment of Blacks in the society. These attitudes are in direct line of cause of delinquency and criminality. Logic dictates that if you're searching for a criminal and Blacks are criminals, a vast portion of your job is done.

Courts

When Blacks go into court, they go in with the consciousness that the whole process is in the hands of "the opposite race." The courts have at many instances not only upheld, but supported secondary status procedures that not only promoted the dehumanization of a people, but encouraged an insecure society to treat a group as inferior. In this sense, the courts have been one of the most influential factors in the labelling of Blacks and their behavior as deviant. The result of actions often employed by institutional spheres such as the police and the courts has meant that an offense precipitated or imposed upon a Black will be defined in the eyes of the dominant groups.

Scheff (1966:34), in his appraisal of mental illness as deviant behavior offers an explanation of "residual deviance" that seems equally applicable for the usage of deviance in this paper. Witness this passage:

> . . . although there is great cultural variation in what is defined as decent or real, each culture tends to reify its definition of decency and reality, and so provides no way of handling violations of its expectations in these areas. The typical norms governing "decency" or reality, therefore, literally "goes without saying" and its violation is unthinkable for most of its members. For the convenience of the society in construing those instances of unnamable rule-breaking which are called to its attention, these violations may be lumped together into a residual category: witchcraft, spirit possession, mental illness . . . and for the purposes here presented I have taken the liberty of including skin-color into this category.

It may not be readily apparent to everyone just how skin-color can become envisioned as a type of residual deviance. Initially, no such categories existed to handle groups of people who did not conform to the recognized mode of normality, that is, white, elongated noses, tall, thin-lipped, straight-haired, and narrow eyed. Individuals who conformed to this general stereotype apparently were by all standards human, therefore, those individuals with varying physiological characteristics came to be logically considered something less-than-human.

It became the general "task" of whites in America to "type" those individuals whose features differed from their own normal appearance. The task of these "racists," Dunham (1947:96, 97) maintains, became to choose as a basis of racial classifications, not any quality which is essential, but a quality which they think one can easily recognize and can be made to hate. It is simplistic to see that there is no quality more obvious than the color of a man's skin, and no facial feature more plain than the shape of one's nose. This is a most simple way of draw-

ing racial differentiations for it requires no more intelligence than the ability to see and describe.

For those "different" individuals, the problem came to be the necessity of defining these groups in terms of their differences, and one assumes the probability of these groups being defined sub-normally, if the dominant group is different and normal. In the process of labelling these individuals appropriately, the netresult inherently assumed a problem nature. As a result of the given label to the status of being Black, birth was given to a social problem that would have no foreseeable end. Blumer (1971:305-6) defines this process as coming about primarily in terms of how it is defined and conceived in a society instead of as an objective condition with an objective makeup. In this sense, the means by which blackness comes to be defined as deviant is a process of collective definitions instead of existing independently in and of itself.

The Stigma

The term stigma, as used in this paper, will make use of the definition presented by Goffman (1963:3), referring to any physical condition, personality trait, or attribute of behavior which marks an individual as being morally inferior. Scott (1970:255,87) states that one can only speak of "constructed" meanings of stigma in the sense that they are genuinely man-made and do not inhere in nature or in the stigmatizing conditions to which they are applied. Scott also suggests that "experts" or professional agencies applying the particular label do so, unaware of the long-term consequences that grow up around it. However, this is not the case in relation to the labelling, by "official"

networks of a group, derogatorily, according to skin-color. The definition of the label was well-understood by the applicators and the evolution of stigma insured through legislation reinforcing the power of the label. The applicators of the label, in this sense, produce and rejuvenate the stigma through the process of public degradation and denunciation.

Garfinkel (1968:188) refers to public degradation as the transformation of identities in the destruction of one social object and the constitution of another. This is not merely the substitution of one identity for another, but the total destruction of the former status or character of the individual or group acted upon. As noted earlier, the courts played an essential role in the creation and generation of the stigma, and in legislation or laws regarding the issue of skin-color, an almost irrevocable one.

In the famous case of Dred Scott vs. Sanford, 19 How. 393 (1857), Chief Justice Taney adjudged that "the decendants of Africans who were imported into this country and sold as slaves were not included nor intended to be" included under the word "citizens" in the Constitution, and could not claim any of the rights and privileges which that instrument provided for and secured to citizens of the United States; that at the time of the adoption of the Constitution they were "considered as a subordinate and inferior class of beings, who had been subjugated by the dominant race, and whether emancipated or not, yet remained subject to their authority, and had no rights or privileges but such as those who held the power and the government might choose to grant them."

Official interpretations of the attachment of secondary-citizen, non-citizen, and non-human labels to individuals has had tremendous

impact upon the ongoing stigma associated with being black. The official power originally imputed to the black identity has found tremendous and frequent reinforcement and recall to public ceremony since 1857 right down unto the time of the writing of this paper.

One of the most powerful reinforcers of the stigma associated with being Black is that of exclusion and segregation. Major manifestations in the form of ostracism and avoidance are important basis' for the identification of Blacks as secondary-citizens. The ghetto or separate-but-equal institutions have provided a means of avoiding interaction with these unfavorable objects of lower humanity. By creating methods of legally separating Blacks from the dominant society, the system of "different others" is perpetuated.

The means whereby a dominant group comes to stigmatize a coexisting group as inferior are nto always clear-cut. Shoham (1970:108) offers an explanation of the initiation of the process in an achievement-obsessed culture (in the instance here, the United States):

> Social stigma in an achievement-obsessed culture serves as an illusory achievement technique where real achievement has failed or is insufficient (as defined by the stigmatizer). Because achievement is relative ego can "achieve" by derogatorily branding (stigmatizing) alter.

This explanation presents the actual function of stigma, not as a self-bettering (the stigmatizer) tool, but as a tool with which to lower the status of the stigmatized, thereby putting self's status in a new, more acceptable perspective. In a very real sense, the superiority of the white-dominant group is predicated upon the relative status of the Black-inferior group. Also, in the achievement-obsessed culture, the Black's sporadic successful innovation is itself stigmatized by "ex-

plaining away" his performance so as to narrow the gap of "relative-achievement." (Shoham, 109)

The Visible Label and Immortality

It is not foreseeable when being Black shall cease to be a form of social deviance. In the vast majority of processes of childhood socialization, a considerable amount of time is spent, in both Black and white instances, emphasizing and reemphasizing the determined differences and points of general conflict and contrast between the races. In this manner, each succeeding generation has the fears and prejudicial fallacies of the former impinged upon them. Consider the following normative analysis of Lillian Smith (1961:15-18), recalling childhood teachings about Blacks:

> . . . by the time I had learned that God is love, that Jesus is His Son and came to give us more abundant life, that all men are brothers with a common Father, I also knew that I was better than a Negro, that all Black folks have their place and must be kept in it, that a terrifying disaster would befall the South if ever I treated a Negro as my social equal . . .

As can be seen, a set of prescriptions was being put forth for the interaction with those individuals with black skins, a process that develops skin-color as the basis of extra-human or sub-human attributes. Witness further:

> . . . nor would a well-bred southerner call a Negro "mister" or invite him into the living room or eat with him or sit by him in public places . . .
>
> I learned to use a soft voice to oil my words of superiority . . . From the Day I was born, I began to learn my lessons . . .

The fact that from childhood we're taught a set of hypothetical action-response "laws" in regards to race decreases the likelihood of the Black in American society ever coming to be considered as man

first, race second. Dollard (1957:440) discusses the generation of a caste system when he relates the general attitude of whites toward Blacks. "This caste system," he writes, "is a barrier on growing up . . . There is one very important difference between the Negro and the child. The inferior status of the white child is temporary and the hope of personal maturity is present, sure and strong; with the Negro the status of the child is confirmed and chronic, and there is no hope of escaping it." Looking at the apparent need of the white populace to discriminate, Dollard suggests that the alternatives to racial prejudice involve either inversion of aggression toward oneself, which would likely be instrumental in the production of neuroses, or a substitution of a moral equilivalent of Blacks, i.e., some other target against whom aggression might be flung. And it is highly unlikely that any other group will be so subjugated or should be. Therefore, a time when Blacks cease to be objects of deviation is not foreseeable.

Fanon (1967:187) asks the question, "Can the white man behave healthily toward the Black man and can the Black man behave healthily toward the white man." Since we all live and thrive in a culture that is obsessed with white-black racism, it is totally impossible to visualize someone living free from varying degrees of racial fantasy. The degree to which these racial fantasies emerge in society is the determining factor in the ongoing processes of racial discrimination and differentiation.

Kovel (1970:54,55) delineates three ideal types for the classification and representation of particular racists' ideologies; dominative, aversive, and recessive (my terminology from his general implied traits).

1. The dominative racist acts out bigoted beliefs. These individuals are often members of mobs and anti-black groups and are exemplified by the open flame of hatred, openly seeking to oppress Blacks and willing to use force to further his ends.

2. The aversive racist believes in "white superiority" and is more or less aware of it, but does nothing overt about it. He tries to ignore the existence of Blacks, to avoid contact with them, and at most to be polite, correct and cold in whatever dealings are necessary between the races. Only confrontation with Blacks does his traits become dominantive.

3. The recessive racist does not reveal racist tendencies. His feelings are best characterized as ambivalent. He sees and recognizes other's racist tendencies but is not moved to place himself either in or out of those categories that he defines.

Through human interaction, the label of the American Black continues to be a derogatory and deviant one. Through the socialization process, the individual is taught a set of attitudes and values that put the mere adjective of blackness in a deviant, no, evil perspective. In our seemingly casual, everyday thought processes we become entrenched in the application of "Black" in conjunction with the undesirable qualities of the human experience.

Webster's New World Dictionary of the American Language defines the term black thusly;

> . . . opposite to white; dark-complexioned; Negro; soiled, dirty, evil, wicked, harmful; disgraceful, sad dismal, gloomy; sullen and angered . . . without hope.

while white is correspondingly defined as:

> . . . opposite to Black; morally or spiritually pure; spotless; innocent; free from evil intent, harmless; having a light-colored skin; Caucasian; honest; honorable, fair . . . dependable.

Kovel maintains that existing definitions such as these, coupled with the differing life-styles of some Blacks, confirm a sense of radical difference between peoples, a difference, combined with the original African's (circa 1619-1865) "evident heathenism," gave the Europeans a sense of awe. Blackness immediately became elaborated: these people were black; naked; unchristian: ergo, they were the "damned". (Kovel, 175)

Kovel (177) declares racism to be ultimately indivisible from the rest of American life. To admit that the system is ridiculous would be to admit the engagement in exploitative dehumanization.

Some Concluding Observations

It seems pointless to proceed in the citation of excerpts from the mountains of material written on the subject of the ascribed status of the Black man in this society. The peculiar preoccupation of white society with skin-color cannot be explained in this paper. One can only marvel at some of the explanations that have emerged in an effort to support white supremacy. It seems that as long as differences, culturally, physically, emotionally and situationally can be perceived by men that these very characteristics lend themselves to the perpetuation of superior-inferior distinctions. In the following inscriptions by various authors in our illustrious American history, let us conclude by viewing some of the general assumed attributes of the Black American.

Colfax (1833:25,26) set forth a whole range of physical differences between whites and Blacks which demonstrate the inherent Black inferiority.

> The Negro's facial angle is "almost to a level with that of the brute"; hence "the achnowledged meanness of the Negro's intellect only coincides with the shape of his head."

Colfax's reasoning further progressed along the line that since the Negro was inferior by reason of physiology, "no alteration of their present social condition would be productive of the least benefit to them," inasmuch as no change in their nature can be expected to result therfrom. (Fredrickson, 1971:50)

There was a widespread belief, and one still predominant in the "reasoning-chain" of many individuals, that no Negro people ever built a civilization dictated the conclusions that Blacks were therefore an inferior species. The arguments that different peoples, living in different regions of the world were in actuality very different from one another. This, more than any one thing is predominantly responsible for providing a basis for racial ethnocentrism. The fact remains that the cultures of various members of the human family tend to be very much alike. Woodson (1962:5) states that the early civilization of the African did not differ much from that of the primitive Greeks or Romans. The result of European observations has been to conclude that because the African is physically unlike the white man or because the outward appearance of the African's culture differs from the white's, his achievements are neither significant nor worthwhile. (Woodson)

Woodson (7) points to the tendency of the white man to overlook a solid criteria, if one does exist, for comparing various societies.

> The trouble . . . results from the belief that differences in culture imply superiority or inferiority . . . If their industrial

> system does not harmonize with the projected exploitation by the conquerors, the natives are lazy and shiftless. If the victims of their greed do not readily wear the foreign yoke, they are cruel savages who should be destroyed that the interlopers may have full sway without the mischievous interference of the aborigines.

There is no pureness of race. This is less apparent now than in antiquity. In ancient Asia and Africa, there were a vast variety of "peoples of color." The fact is that the number of Blacks who are actually black is rather minute. Blacks, like other peoples of color vary in color from one extreme to another. The commonly alluded to Egyptian-Ethiopian civilization was, at various periods of history referred to as "The Land of the Mixed Breeds," and it takes no more than mere observation to realize that there are varying shades of individuals throughout the whole of humanity. (Woodson,52)

Pity the Pagan

There is a people trampling through the wilderness. It is plain to see that they are just above the ape on the evolutionary scale. Their instruments are crude and their religion in its rudimentary stages. Observation and study indicate that they worship a vengeful and jealous tribal god with a wrath that strikes fear into their hearts. They venerate a child, and call him holy, born from their very midst; the dissociated offspring of a young girl of Ethiopian stock and a gentleman of the ancient Hebrew lineage. On various occasions offerings, both animate and inanimate, are offered up to appease the tempermant of their deity. Their god proceeds them in warfare against their neighboring tribes in an effort to assert his glory. This god is old, born among the desperations and wanderings of the ancient Hebrews; migrated to Greece on the trail of History;

pilfered by Rome; interspersed in Africa; imposed on Europe; and forced to the Americas in pursuit of freedom.

And the fierceness of these peoples and the vigil of their hatred of other nations is a wonder to behold. Pity the pagan, he who is an aversion to civilizations.

The sojourn of the Black man in white society can best be summed up by the following quote by James Baldwin:

> One night in 1964 when the civil rights rising was high in the nation, James Baldwin was on television talking to the white world. His angry eyes stared into a nation of white viewers. Without blinking he said to each white who viewed him, "If I am a nigger you invented me."

(Conrad, 1966:VII)

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